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ABSTRACT

Six weeks were spent working with a five-year-old kindergarten child who had an excellent understanding of sound/symbol relationships but did not know how to read for meaning. A variety of techniques was used to help the child develop reading strategies and increase confidence: directed reading-thinking activity in week one; student retelling of a story told to him in week two; cloze procedures to build confidence and strengthen reading for meaning strategies in week three; reading in "Childcraft" in week four; dictation, illustration, and correction of an original story by the student in week five; and reading for meaning with the child himself correcting miscues in week six. Six lessons can be drawn from this child's experience: (1) even the beginning reader needs to be made aware of the use of prediction, (2) teachers need to model questioning strategies to the point where the reader assumes responsibility for his or her own questions, (3) readers need to feel successful, (4) skills need to be taught as they are needed by the reader, (5) readers need to be encouraged to talk and write about what they read, and (6) the reader must be given time to correct miscues. (JL)

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A Kindergartener Learns To Read For Meaning

Five years old and afraid to take a chance--afraid to "sound out" words that don't fit already learned phonics rules. How does a reader learn to take a chance, to read to make "sense," to use language and thought while reading?

This is an account of a kindergarten child learning to read for meaning. Included are some of my observations made during the six weeks we worked together. Ashley was five years old and in public kindergarten; he had already completed a year of private kindergarten where a strong emphasis had been placed on teaching decoding skills.

Ashley had an excellent understanding of the grapho-phonic cue system (sound/symbol relationships) of his language, however, he had not learned about reading for meaning. He usually hesitated to read words not familiar to him; when he encountered a word that did not fit a phonics rule that he had learned, he would stop reading. Additionally, he did not correct those words which did not make sense according to the context in which they were used. Finally, he was unable to retell more than a few details after reading a story. It was necessary to find strategies that would help him as a beginning reader to be less dependent on

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graphophonic cues and more dependent on the use of his language and thought.

Week 1

Stauffer's (1975) Directed Reading-Thinking Activity was the first strategy used with the many stories which were read to Ashley. The purpose for using this strategy was to help him realize that thinking is involved in the reading process. At first he was very reluctant to make predictions since this was a new approach for him. However, after using the DR-TA for the first three days, Ashley began to respond and became more patient with the predictive type of questions. I encouraged him to retell each story after I read it, but he refused saying that he could not remember what it was about. During this time Ashley was not asked to read stories independently. I simply read to him and asked predictive questions.

Week 2

This was an exciting week for Ashley. During this week he did his first retelling of a story. I read "In The Deep Freeze" from the book Animals Do the Strangest Things by Leonard and Arthur Hornblow. Most of his retelling was based on his experiences rather than from the story. However, I accepted his ideas and was careful not to be critical of them; I wanted Ashley to develop confidence at this time. After Ashley's first retelling, I had him retell it a second time while I wrote it. He then did an excellent job of reading the rewrite. He was so motivated

by his success that he asked to read the story from the book himself. He then took the book to school the next day and read the story for his Kindergarten friends. He came back all excited about reading and told me his friends hugged him because they were so happy about his being able to read.

During this week it was necessary to teach Ashley how to use a table of contents. He had so many favorite stories in his book and became very frustrated when trying to find his favorite ones to reread.

Ashley read silently for the first time during this week. When I asked him what he was doing, he said, "Talking to myself." I continued reading to him using the DR-TA. By the end of the week he began to enjoy the prediction games and decided he wanted to assume the role of leader. He asked to read the stories and ask the questions. We were making real progress! My modeling of the strategy was paying off.

Week 3

I began using the oral cloze procedure (Watson, 1973) with the stories I read to him. I omitted highly predictable words as I read, and Ashley had to tell me what they were without reading them. This strategy was used to make him aware of the interaction of language and thought in the reading process. He enjoyed this so much that he decided he would read and omit the words for me. This procedure helped him to continue building reading for meaning strategies, and it also helped him overcome the fear of

being wrong.

Ashley actually began correcting his miscues during this week. When I asked him why he corrected certain words, he very quickly replied that "his brain told him to do it."

It was now normal for Ashley to read at least two hours each day; he would spend an hour with me and would then go to bed early in the evening and read for another hour. He suddenly began to enjoy reading because it was becoming more than a word-calling process

Week 4

Ashley discovered Childcraft and spent several hours each day reading about everything that was of interest to him. I observed him and listened to him; it was amazing to find out that he actually "slid" over words he did not know without getting upset. He would sometimes ask for a word, but normally would not take the time. He was "making sense" of the printed page, and he loved it.

Week 5

I typed Ashley's first original story, "Johnny the Can," as he dictated it. He illustrated each page and reread it several times; he even discovered a few typing errors. Spelling seemed to be very easy for him, but he was very frustrated because he hadn't learned to form all of the letters and couldn't write his own words. Now, he wanted to learn how to form all of the letters of the alphabet so he could be in charge of the writing process.

Week 6

This was a special week since there was a book fair at school. Ashley purchased several books which he read over and over again. As he read Flip and the Morning by Wesley Dennis the first time, I marked his miscues. It is interesting that he miscued on words that were related to what was read before. For example, he miscued while reading the sentence "His mother didn't mind in summer, because Flip could play in the big field without walking waking her." Ashley made the miscue because he associated walking with playing. However, as soon as he read the word her, he corrected. When I asked him why he corrected, he told me he did so because walking did not make sense. Each time he corrected a miscue he told me he did so because it didn't make sense. His miscues did make sense gramatically, but not semantically when considering the meaning of the story. The fact that Ashley was able to correct because he realized what he read did not make sense indicated that he was now reading for meaning. This analysis also tells us that he was now using the graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cue systems of his language in an interrelated manner.

During a six weeks period of time Ashley went from an over-dependence on graphophonic cues to the integrated use of all language cue systems. How had he done it? The teaching strategies used during this time caused him to focus on more than sounding out words. Ashley learned that reading is a meaning-getting process. The oral cloze procedure and the

DR-TA both helped Ashley to take a chance; they both helped him change his view of reading as an exact process. He definitely crossed the bridge from decoding to meaning--this made the world of print an exciting one for him!

What has Ashley taught us?

1. Even the beginning reader needs to be made aware of the use of prediction while reading.
2. Teachers need to model questioning strategies to the point where the reader assumes responsibility for asking his/her own questions.
3. Readers need to feel successful; sensitivity doesn't just happen. Teachers must work hard at helping children succeed.
4. Skills need to be taught as they are needed by the reader.
5. Readers need to be encouraged to talk about what they read; they need to retell stories and write about them; they need to write their own stories to read.
6. The reader must be given time to correct miscues. Correcting miscues that don't make sense tells us the reader is reading for meaning.

All that Ashley has taught us has application for any reader, whether a beginner or a sixth-grade remedial student.

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